DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 332 059 CG 020 486

AUTHOR Stronck, David R.
TITLE Alcohol: The Real Story. It's Your Choice.
REPORT NO ISBN-0-941816-35-4
PUB DATE 87
NOTE 36p.; For other books in this series, see CG 020 482-490.
AVAILABLE FROM Network Publications, 1700 Mission Street, Suite 203, P.O. Box 1830, Santa Cruz, CA 95061-1830 ($2.95; discounts for quantity).
PUB TYPE Reports - General (140) -- Guides - Classroom Use - Instructional Materials (For Learner) (051)

EDRS PRICE MF01 Plus Postage. PC Not Available from EDRS.
DESCRIPTORS Adolescents; *Alcoholic Beverages; *Decision Making; *Drinking; Fiction; Health Education; Instructional Materials; Intermediate Grades; Junior High Schools; Peer Influence; *Preadolescents; *Prevention; *Student Responsibility

ABSTRACT

This informational book on alcohol is part of a series of three interactive books on tobacco, alcohol, and marijuana; three informational books containing parallel content; and three teacher guides designed to give students in grades five through eight practice in using the information and skills presented in the books. The goal of this book and the accompanying interactive book and teacher guide is to prevent alcohol use by preadolescents. This book discusses the physical and psychological effects of alcohol and explains why young people should avoid drinking alcoholic beverages. It describes the trouble with alcohol, explains what an alcoholic drink is, discusses how many drinks make a person drunk, describes how alcohol can make a person feel, and discusses what alcohol can do to the body. Next it considers who drinks alcohol and how much they drink, explains addiction to alcohol, discusses who may be an alcoholic, talks about adolescents who drink, and examines the cost of alcoholic problems. It explains why some young people are tempted to drink and notes that some teenagers never want to drink. Finally, it explains ways to say "no" to alcohol and reminds students that the decision to drink is their choice to make. (NB)

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Alcohol: The Real Story

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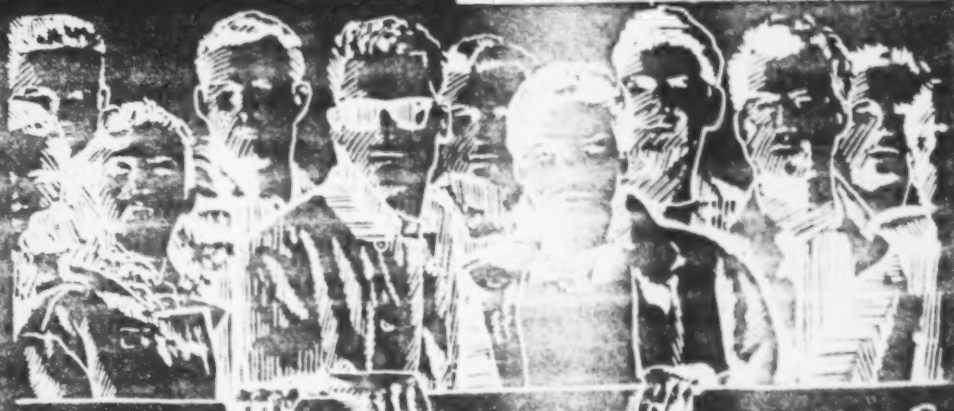

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Library of Congress Cataloging-in-Publication Data

Stronck, David R.
Alcohol: the real story

(It's your choice)
Summary: Describes the physical and psychological effects of alcohol and discusses reasons why young people should avoid drinking.
1. Alcohol--Physiological effect--Juvenile literature. 2. Alcoholism--Juvenile literature. [1. Alcohol. 2. Alcoholism.] I. Ransom, Robert, ill. II. Title. III. Series.
HV5135.S77 1987 362.2'92 87-18547
ISBN 0-941816-35-4 (pbk.)

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(408) 429-9822

ISBN 0-941816-35-4

ALCOHOL: The Real Story

David R. Stronck

Illustrated by Robert Ransom

Network Publications
a division of ETR Associates
Santa Cruz, CA
1987

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DRINKING--FUN OR TROUBLE?

In ads many people are seen drinking alcohol in beer, wine, whiskey, rum, gin, vodka and other drinks. The people in these ads seem to be having a lot of fun drinking. Beer companies pay television networks thousands of dollars to buy a few seconds during football games. Their ads suggest: "Drink beer while you watch a game and relax."

Movies sometimes show people drinking "hard" liquor. These are whiskey, rum, gin, vodka and many others. Cocktails contain hard liquor. Many movies show people drinking at parties and having no problems.

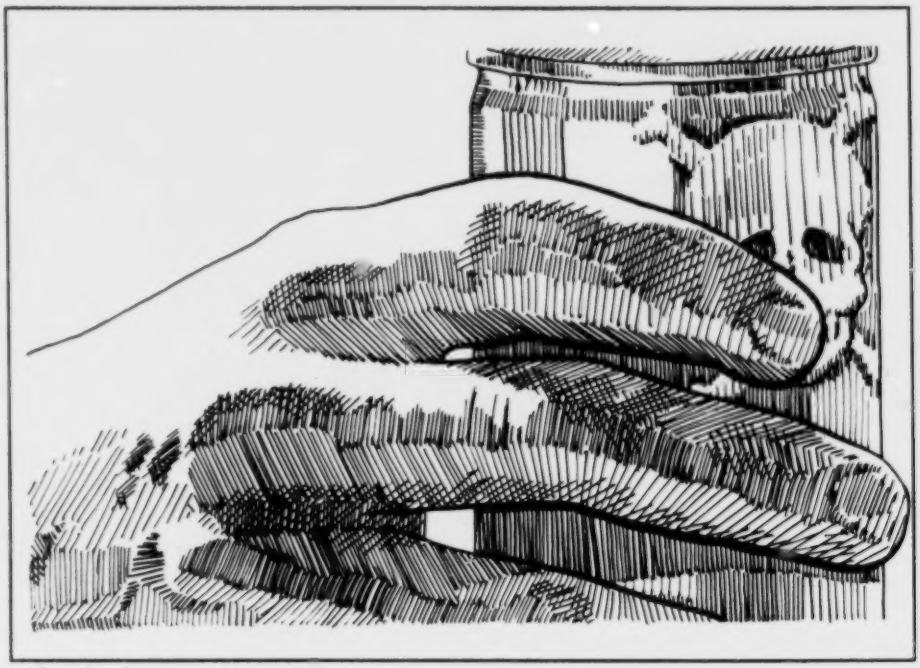
Few movies or ads show people drinking and getting into trouble. Do you think movies, television and ads do a good job of showing what alcohol can do to people? If everything you know about alcohol came from television, magazine ads or movies, would you say alcohol makes people happy or sad?

Some adults can drink alcohol and have no problems. They take one or two drinks over a long period of time, usually with some kind of food. Champagne is sometimes served at weddings along with food. Many people drink wine with their dinners. Do the adults in your family ever have wine with a dinner or at a wedding party?

WHAT'S THE TROUBLE WITH ALCOHOL?

Alcohol is poisonous. The body can get rid of the poison in small amounts. But when someone drinks too much and becomes drunk, alcohol is a big problem. A person who is drunk cannot walk well, speak clearly or drive a car safely. Some drunk people become angry and get into fights. They may hurt themselves or other people. Others cry for no reason.

Most adults can have one or two drinks without getting drunk. After that they begin having problems. They lose their ability to pay attention. They can't judge how fast a car is going. They can't tell how far away another car is. Worst of



Alcohol is poisonous.

all, they don't *feel* like anything is wrong, so they think they can drive safely. Drivers who drink alcohol cause half of all highway deaths. Many of these deaths are young people who are passengers in cars driven by people who have been drinking.

WHAT IS AN ALCOHOLIC DRINK?

Alcoholic drinks contain ethyl alcohol. Ethyl alcohol is not the same as rubbing alcohol found

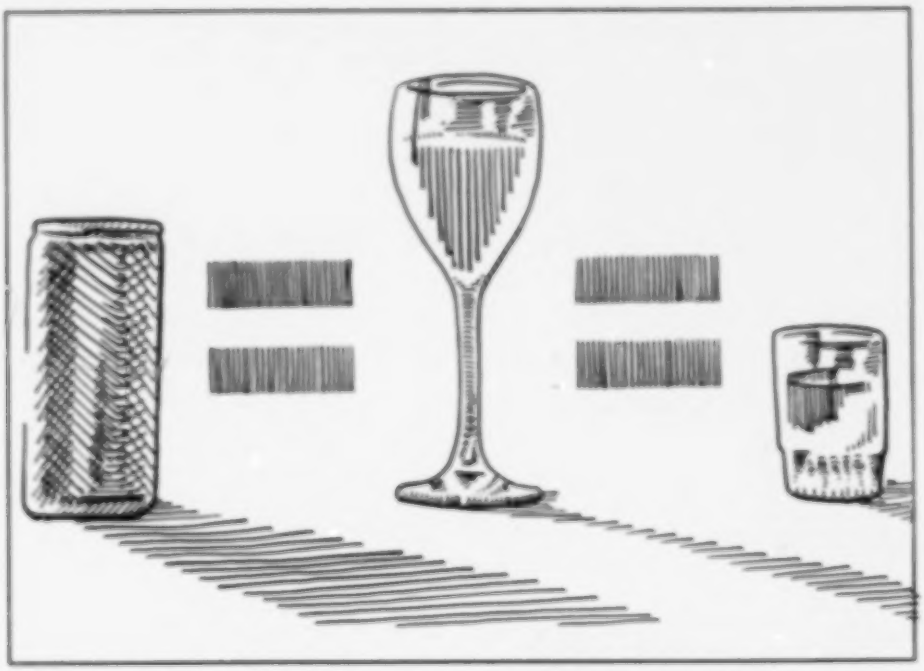
Drivers who drink alcohol cause half of all highway deaths.

in hospitals and many homes. Rubbing alcohol contains methyl alcohol, which can quickly kill people. Ethyl alcohol in small amounts does not kill. The body destroys the alcohol before it can harm the person.

Most people define an alcoholic drink as any drink having one-half of an ounce of alcohol. This amount of alcohol is in one 12-ounce can of beer, one 4-ounce glass of wine, or one "shot"

(1 ounce at 100 proof) of hard liquor. A shot of hard liquor is often poured over ice and/or mixed with soda or tonic water.

Some people foolishly think beer is not dangerous. While it's true you must drink more liquid to get the same amount of alcohol, a person can easily drink enough beer to get drunk.



The amount of alcohol in one 12-ounce can of beer, one 4-ounce glass of wine or a 1-ounce shot of hard liquor is the same.

HOW MANY DRINKS MAKE A PERSON DRUNK?

The number of drinks it takes to make a person drunk depends on many questions:

- *How much does the person weigh?* Large people can drink more. They have more muscles. And muscles help the body get rid of the alcohol faster. So a man who weighs 240 pounds can drink twice as much as a man who weighs 100 pounds.

- *How old is the person?* A teenager's body can't get rid of the alcohol as well as an adult's. If you are 12 years old and weigh 80 pounds, one drink on an empty stomach can make you feel foolish and out of control.

- *How much food has the person eaten?* Food slows down the effects of alcohol. Drinking a little wine with a big dinner is harmless to most adults. The same amount of wine on an empty stomach will have a much different effect. Slowly drinking a cocktail with dinner could be

safe. Drinking a cocktail quickly before dinner without any food could make the same person drunk.

- *How fast does the person drink the alcohol?* Most adults can safely drink one alcoholic beverage an hour. A person who drinks more than two drinks in an hour will soon be drunk.

- *Is the drinker a man or woman?* A woman who weighs 150 pounds probably cannot drink as much as a man who weighs 150 pounds. This is because most women have less muscle in their bodies than men. Muscle helps the body get rid of alcohol.

HOW DOES ALCOHOL MAKE YOU FEEL?

Your size, age and sex make a big difference in how alcohol makes you feel. A younger or older man, a woman, a larger or smaller person will all have different reactions to alcohol. The following facts are only true for a healthy man who weighs 150 pounds and is 25 years old:

- After one drink (beer, wine or hard liquor), he feels relaxed. He talks more and louder.

- After two drinks in two hours he may feel warmer and his face may turn red. He *feels* warm, but if you took his temperature he would be colder—the brain's message to the body is wrong. This is dangerous if the person is in a cold place— skiing for example. If he feels warm he won't do anything to protect himself from frost-bite.

- After three drinks in two hours, he is "high" or feeling very happy. Suddenly he may start to feel sad. His speech is no longer clear. His vision is starting to blur. He may not hear as well as he usually does. He should not drive a car.

- After four drinks in two hours, he can't walk very well. He may knock over a glass or drop things on the floor. He is losing his judgment and memory. Bright lights hurt his eyes.

- After five drinks in two hours, the amount of alcohol in his blood has reached the level that makes it illegal for him to drive a car. If he is stopped by the police he will be put in jail. He cannot walk along a straight line. Bright lights from an auto at night blind him for a dangerous amount of time. He is not alert to what is going on around him.

- After seven drinks in two hours, vision is blurred. Hearing is reduced. His mind is no longer clear. Everything is getting confused.

- After ten drinks in two hours, he may need help to move. He is weak and quiet. His moods may change quickly. He may be happy one minute and angry or sad the next.

- After fifteen drinks in two hours a dentist or doctor could operate on him without any anesthetic and he wouldn't care about the pain. He is almost unconscious.

- After twenty drinks in two hours, he is dangerously intoxicated or poisoned. He may no longer be conscious. Breathing may stop and he could die.

- After twenty-five drinks in two hours, he is probably dead. A bottle of hard liquor contains 33.8 ounces. This is more than enough to kill a 150 pound man. A young person who weighs less could easily die from much less alcohol than this.

WHAT DOES ALCOHOL DO TO THE BODY?

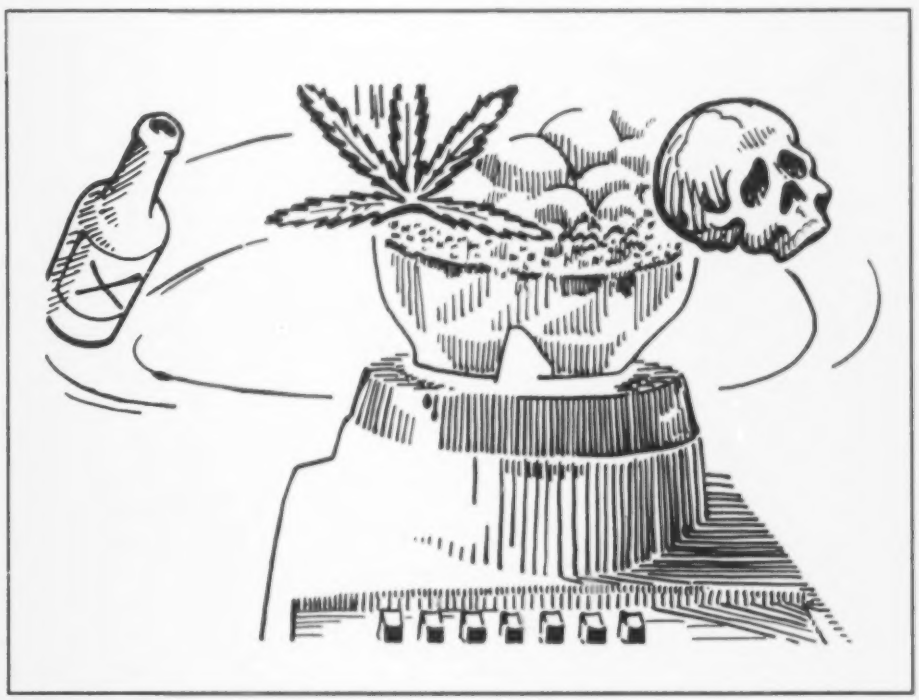
Here are some things alcohol can do to the human body:

- A person who drinks too much alcohol may start vomiting. The body is trying to get rid of the poison.

- A person who drinks alcohol and takes another drug at the same time (such as a tranquilizer or sleeping pill) is taking a big risk. Both alcohol and some drugs tend to put people to sleep.

Alcohol taken with another drug will more than double the effect of either drug. So it doesn't take as much of either drug to cause problems.

- Taking alcohol and marijuana at the same time can cause a very serious problem, even death. Marijuana is an illegal drug that can stop vom-



Taking alcohol and marijuana at the same time can cause a serious problem, even death.

iting. It interferes with the body's way of getting rid of a poison.

- A person who drinks too much may have a hangover the next day. A hangover makes a person sick for a day or two. The person may have an upset stomach, feel weak and have a headache.

- Heavy drinking over a long time may destroy much of a person's liver. The liver takes in all the food and prepares it to go through the blood to the rest of the body.

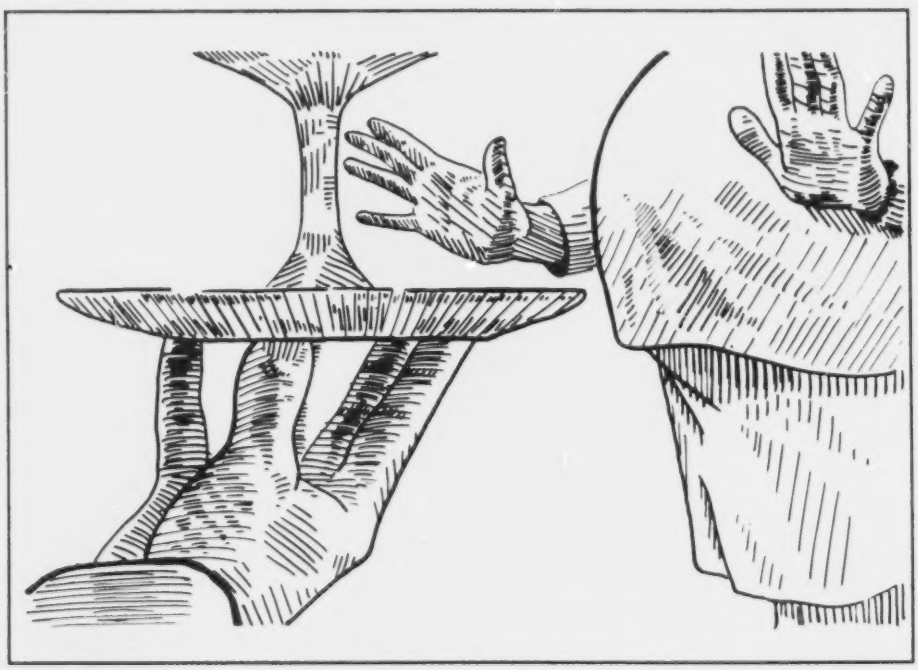
  The liver can destroy a small amount of alcohol. But if there is too much alcohol, some of the liver is poisoned and dies. If much of the liver dies, the person gets a disease called cirrhosis. Cirrhosis is one of the ten leading causes of death in the United States.

- Pregnant women who drink alcohol may harm their unborn baby. Alcohol can stop healthy nerves from growing in the baby's early weeks of development. Alcohol in the mother's blood

can cause the baby to be born with mental retardation and damage the heart or liver.

WHO DRINKS ALCOHOL AND HOW MUCH DO THEY DRINK?

About one-third of all adults never drink alcohol or only drink once in a while. Another third are light drinkers. They do not get drunk because they drink only a little at any one time.



Pregnant women who drink alcohol may harm their unborn baby.

About one-fourth of adults are moderate drinkers. They often drink alcohol and sometimes drink enough to begin getting drunk. But they do not like being drunk and they are able to control their drinking.

Nine percent of adults are heavy drinkers. They often get drunk. Some of these heavy drinkers are alcoholics.

ADDICTION TO ALCOHOL

Very few people drink enough alcohol in a short period of time to die. They usually vomit or pass out before they do. But many die slowly from too much alcohol over a long period of time. Some people cannot control the amount they drink. They are addicted to alcohol. When alcohol takes over and controls the lives of addicted persons it is called alcoholism. The addicted person is called an alcoholic.

There are three stages of alcoholism. Sometimes these stages happen when the person is a teenager or young adult. So the person knows right

away that he or she is an alcoholic. Other times, it takes many years for a person to learn that he or she can't drink alcohol. Some alcoholics never admit they have a problem. Their drinking keeps causing trouble for them and their families.

- The first stage of alcoholism is the warning stage. People in this stage often drink alcohol until they are drunk. They cannot remember what happened while they were drinking. They begin to think the only fun in life is drinking alcohol. They do not go to parties to meet people or be with friends. They go so they can drink alcohol.

- The crucial stage comes next. People in this stage cannot drink just one drink. They keep drinking until they are drunk. Alcohol is beginning to control their lives even though they may not think so.

  When they are not drinking, people in the crucial stage seem to be able to carry out their work. If they are students, they may even be

getting good grades. Housewives go on taking care of their families. Workers go to their jobs each day. It doesn't seem like alcohol is a problem in their lives, so they keep on drinking. Finally they reach the last stage of alcoholism.

- The chronic stage is the third and final stage of alcoholism. Alcoholics in this stage can no longer live normal lives. Workers lose their jobs. Students drop out of high school or college. They may be drunk for many days at a time. Nothing in life is important to them except alcohol.

  Addiction to alcohol causes changes in the victim's body. The alcoholic no longer gets hungry for food. Alcohol is the only "food" they desire. Without alcohol they may see things that really are not there—called "hallucinations." They may shake and not be able to stop the shaking. They need help. They are very sick.

WHO MAY BE AN ALCOHOLIC?

The National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism says that there is no typical alcoholic. Some wealthy people are alcoholics. Some famous people are alcoholics. Mothers and fathers can be alcoholics.

About 1,000,000 teenagers are alcoholics. Young people become addicted to alcohol much more quickly than adults. All of these alcoholics did not stop at the warning stage. What should people do to avoid a problem with alcohol?

TEENS WHO DRINK ALCOHOL

The law doesn't allow young people to buy alcohol. But some teenagers manage to get it from others. About 3,300,000 young people have drinking problems. Teens who drink may fight with parents, teachers and friends. They may miss school or drop out altogether. They can get into trouble with the police.

THE COST OF ALCOHOLIC PROBLEMS

Most teenagers who try alcohol do not know what to expect. They have seen adults drink one beer and drive away safely in a car. But when teenagers drink the same amount they are unable to drive a car safely. Alcohol kills 8,000 teenagers per year on the highways. Forty thousand more receive serious injuries that affect them for the rest of their life. For example, some will never be able to walk again.

Many parents have lost a son or daughter because someone was drinking and driving. Sisters, brothers and other young people have lost persons who were close to them. These people have formed groups called "Mothers Against Drunk Driving" (MADD) and "Students Against Drunk Driving" (SADD) to try to stop drunk people from getting behind the wheel of a car.

Some teenagers sign a contract promising to phone their parents at any time of the day or night to get a safe ride home. The parents promise they will ask no questions for 24 hours

Students Against Drunk Driving (SADD) tries to stop drunk people from getting behind the wheel of a car.

but just help their children. Do you know any families who have signed this contract?

Many families have problems and even break up because of alcohol. Drinking can cause some people to become violent. To protect their children or themselves, some mothers must leave husbands who drink.

The police have found that drunk persons commit more than half of all violent crimes. They attack, rob or kill other people. People who are drunk do not act like smart people. They do foolish things and hurt others.

The abuse of alcohol is the most expensive drug problem in the USA. In 1984 alcohol cost $40 billion for health and other problems.

SOME YOUNG PEOPLE AREN'T TEMPTED TO DRINK

Some young people don't need to decide whether to drink. They already know they don't want to try alcohol because of one or more of the following reasons:

- A family member or friend has a problem with alcohol. Perhaps someone they know has lost their license to drive a car because of alcohol. Maybe they lost their job from drinking. Maybe they hurt someone. Teenagers who know someone like this don't want to have the same troubles so they have decided not to drink.

- They don't like the taste of alcohol. Most people don't like alcohol at first. Many people trust this first reaction of their bodies and don't need to force themselves or convince themselves that they like it.

- Their friends think drinking is dangerous. Perhaps they have seen an automobile accident that was caused by a drunk driver. They may

At first, most young people don't like the taste of alcohol.

have been in one. They will not ride in a car with a driver who has been drinking.

- They don't like the way people act when they've had too much to drink. Some young people come from homes where adults have a problem with alcohol. Perhaps holidays are no fun because of too much drinking. Some drunk parents abuse their children and each other.

- Their parents do not drink and have asked them not to drink and they do not want to get into trouble with parents, teachers or the police. They respect the rules at home, school or public places.

- There is no easy way for them to get alcohol.

WHY DO SOME TEENAGERS DRINK ALCOHOL?

Other young people don't have these experiences in their lives. They think drinking doesn't cause any problems. They may feel tempted to

try alcohol for one or more of the following reasons:

- They think drinking makes them an adult. Most states require people to be 21 to drink. Young people who break the law want to show off and act older. Do young people look older when they drink? If they get drunk will that make them seem older?

- They drink because their friends drink and they want to be part of the group. They may find themselves at a party where everyone seems to be doing just one thing—drinking alcohol. It is hard to feel left out. Do you think that people at these parties really have fun? Can you think of other ways to have fun?

- They drink to try to have a good time. Ads on TV, in newspapers and magazines show happy adults enjoying alcohol. Few TV shows or movies show the problems of alcohol—people who become addicted, drunk and sick from

drinking alcohol. If we believe the ads, alcohol is good for everyone. Is it?

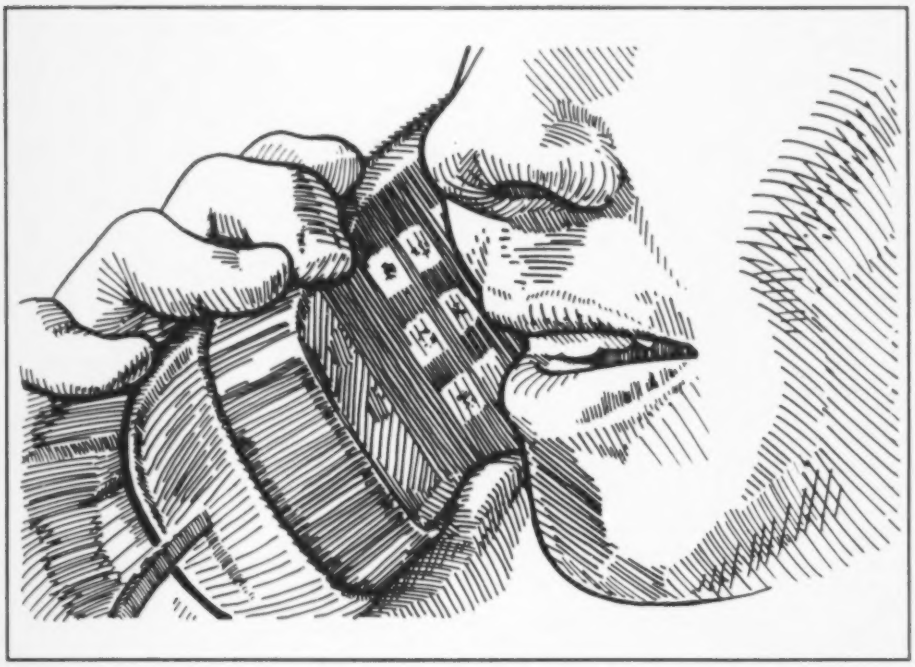
- They are curious about how alcohol will make them feel and act.

SAYING NO TO ALCOHOL

Even if you don't want to drink alcohol, it may sometimes be hard to say no. Can you think of ways to be strong about your decision not to drink alcohol in the following situations?

- *Susan goes to a party with her friends. Everyone at the party is about her age. There are no parents or older people at home. One of the boys has brought a case of beer to the party and is passing it around to everyone saying, "Let's start the party!"*

  Susan's friends start drinking and pretending they are actors on a TV beer ad. Susan has tasted beer and knows she doesn't like it. She has also promised her parents not to drink until she is older. What could she do?



It's a good idea to call your parents if you need a safe ride home.

Susan could hold the beer and not drink it. She could try to find something nonalcoholic to drink. She could leave the party. She could call her parents. What would you do if you were Susan?

- ❑ *Carlos is alone at home watching a football game. He goes to the refrigerator for a soft drink and finds that his parents have stocked the refrigerator with beer and wine for a party they're*

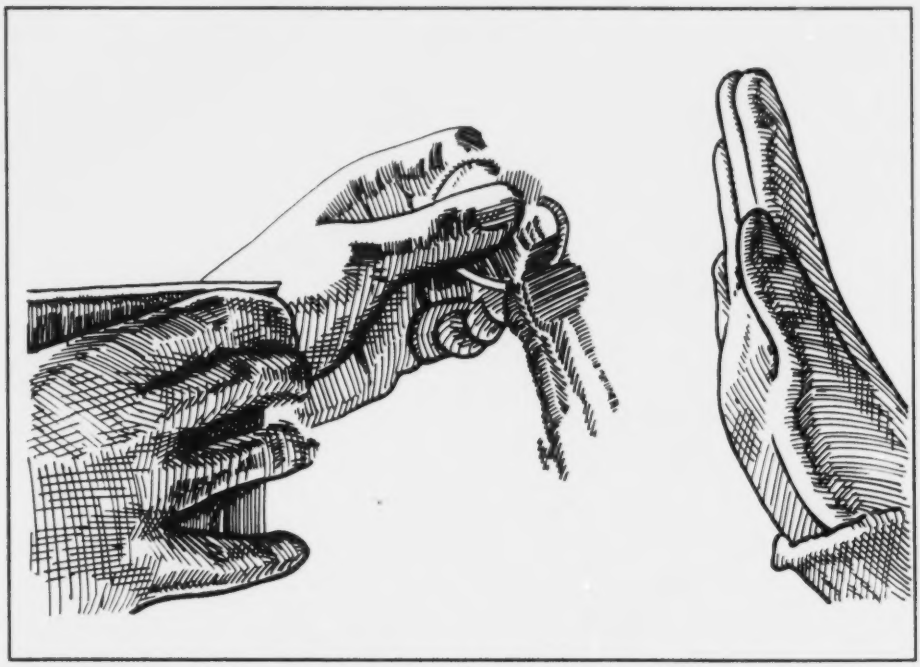
having that night. He thinks about trying a beer. He has seen many people on TV ads enjoying beer and his father drinks beer while he watches sports on TV. He thinks his parents wouldn't miss a bottle or two. What should Carlos do?

Carlos could wait and ask his parents before experimenting with something as possibly dangerous as alcohol. Can you think of other things he might do? What would you do?

❑ *Laura is at a party with some older teenagers. She likes David, who is old enough to drive a car. David has driven Laura home before and she knows he is a good driver. But tonight David is drinking beer.*

David no longer speaks clearly and he has stopped dancing. He offers to drive Laura home. What could she do?

Laura could tell David she won't ride home with him because he's been drinking alcohol. She could arrange to ride home with someone who



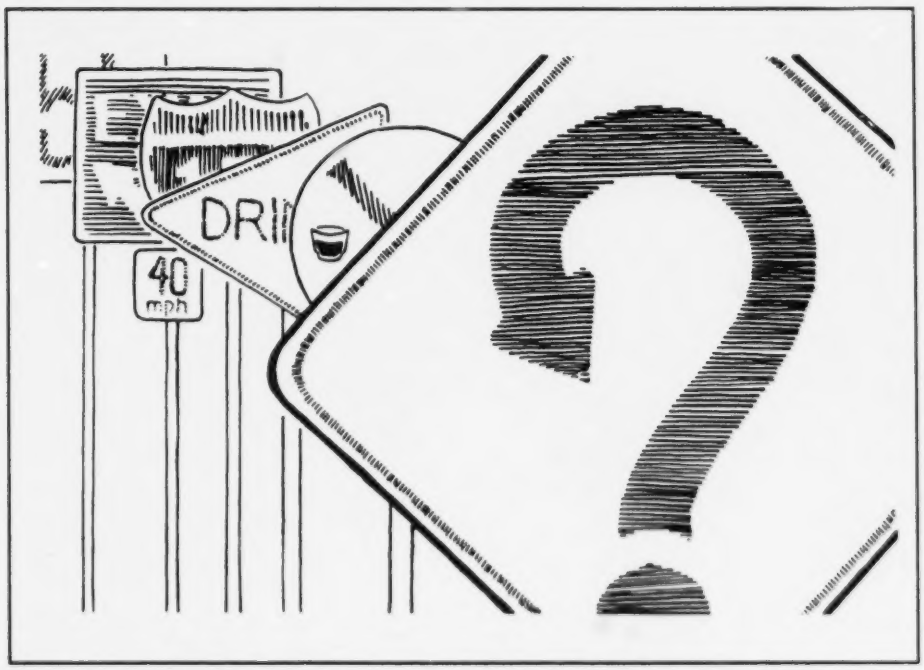
Don't ride with someone who has been drinking.

has not been drinking. Can you think of other ways Laura might get home? What would you do in Laura's place?

- ❑ *Jesse's older sister just got married. Now Jesse and everyone else at the wedding is attending a reception. Champagne is being served. There is a punch bowl of fruit juice for those who don't want champagne, but only little children seem to be drinking the fruit punch.*

No one at the party is watching him. He could probably take the champagne without anyone saying anything to him. What do you think Jesse should do?

Jesse could ask his parents for permission to join the adults in drinking champagne. He could decide not to drink. He could drink the champagne without asking. What would you do if you were Jesse?



Think about making your own choice about alcohol.

YOUR CHOICE

Many teenagers don't really make a choice about alcohol. They let others tell them what to do. A friend at a party, an older brother or sister or someone they don't even know might give them their first drink.

Think about making your own choice about alcohol. You can learn the facts and get your ideas together about whether you want to drink or not. Making a choice now will prepare you for the future. You will be ready to say no if you don't want to drink. If you choose to drink sometime in the future, you will know how to drink safely. The important point is to make a smart choice. Think about it. It's your life. Be sure you're the one who's in charge of it.

About this Book

ALCOHOL: The Real Story is part of an important new series of books designed to help young people make informed, responsible decisions about drug use. Other books in the series include *MARIJUANA: The Real Story* and *TOBACCO: The Real Story*.

The development of these books was supported by funds from the National Institute of Child Health and Development. They have gone through extensive testing with preadolescents and have been carefully reviewed by substance abuse professionals. The committee of professionals not only gave initial input to determine appropriate content, but also reviewed the books during development.

The series provides young people with critical information about substance abuse, and prepares them to deal with social situations in which they are most likely to encounter marijuana, alcohol and tobacco.

About the Author

Author David R. Stronck, PhD, is professor of science education at California State University at Hayward. He has extensive experience writing school texts and has published numerous articles in scholarly journals. He has been the editor of the *California Science Teacher's Journal* and serves as a consultant to school districts.

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Also available as part of this series are three interactive fiction books. *Serena's Secret, Danny's Dilemma* and *Christy's Chance* combine substance abuse information and models for resisting peer pressure in the popular interactive adventure book format. The characters in these interactive books are presented with choices about drug use. The reader makes a decision for the character, turns to the appropriate page and learns the consequences of that particular choice. One interactive story can be reread many times. Each time the story is different depending on the reader's choices.

LEARN THE REAL STORY ABOUT ALCOHOL

This book tells you the facts about alcohol. Many young people don't really make a choice about drinking alcohol. They let others tell them what to do. *ALCOHOL: The Real Story* gives you the information you need to make **your own** decision.

What is an alcoholic drink?
How many drinks make a person drunk?
What does alcohol do to the body?
What is alcohol addiction?
Why do some teenagers drink alcohol?
How can you say no to alcohol?

It's your life! Be sure you're the one who's in charge of it.

NETWORK PUBLICATIONS
$2.95

ISBN 0-941816-35-4